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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 013414

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SUBJECT: DISCUSSION ON THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN THE
- PHILIPPINES

REF: MANILA 2840

11. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT

12. SUMMARY: DURING JULY 12 LUNCHEON MEETING WITH POLOFF, RETIRED DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR JOEL DE LOS SANTOS DESCRIBED THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF PEACE WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY AS LESS THAN ENCOURAGING. HE FELT THAT A MAIN PROBLEM WAS THE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF MUSLIM CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INDIGENOUS MUSLIM SOCIETIES ON THE PART OF MAIN-LINE POLITICAL LEADERS, BOTH MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN. DE LOS SANTOS WAS AWARE OF HOUSE SPEAKER DE VENECIA'S EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF COL. QADHAFI AND CLAIMED THAT LIBYA HAD DIRECTED FUNDS TO PRESIDENT RAMOS' 1992 CAMPAIGN. HE SAID HE HAD COMPLETED A STUDY OF THE PEACE PROCESS COMMISSIONED BY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JOSE ALMONTE, AND CONCLUDED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) WOULD PROBABLY NOT PRODUCE A LASTING PEACE WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY. END SUMMARY

13. POLOFF INVITED DE LOS SANTOS TO LUNCH TO CONTINUE AN ACQUAINTANCE BEGUN THE PREVIOUS WEEK AT THE FIRST CONFERENCE ON THE MUSLIM FUTURE (SEE REFTEL). DE LOS SANTOS IS A FORMER PROFESSOR AT DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY SPECIALIZING IN ISLAMIC AFFAIRS WHO NOW WORKS AS A CONSULTANT. HE CLAIMED TO BE CLOSE TO ALL FACETS OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, INCLUDING "BOTH ABOVE GROUND AND UNDERGROUND" SECTORS.

14. DISCUSSING THE CONTINUING PROBLEM WITH AN EXTREMIST INSURGENCY IN THE SOUTH, DE LOS SANTOS SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WAS REALLY HAPPENING IN THE MUSLIM REGIONS. THE INSURGENTS HAVE BEEN LABELED "ABU SAYYAF" BY THE MEDIA, BUT THAT ORGANIZATION IS JUST THE SURFACE MANIFESTATION OF A MORE PROLONGED PROCESS OF THE INSEEPAGE OF ISLAMIC THINKING BOTH AMONG THE MUSLIM POPULATION AND ITS POLITICAL LEADERS. THE TENDENCY TO BRAND ALL ENEMIES WITH THE SAME BRUSH FAILED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE MANY DIFFERENCES WITHIN ISLAM; FOR EXAMPLE, HE SAID THAT THE LIBYAN BRAND OF "LITTLE GREEN BOOK ISLAM" IS REGARDED WITH CONTEMPT BY PHILIPPINE FUNDAMENTALISTS AS WELL AS MANY OF THEIR MUSLIM BRETHREN IN OTHER COUNTRIES. HE REFERRED TO THE LARGER PHENOMENON OF INCREASED ISLAMIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND BUILDING OF FUNDAMENTALIST MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AS THE "MOVEMENT" AND SAID IT WAS CONNECTED TO THE EGYPTIAN-BASED MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD SINCE 1988. EXPOSURE TO ISLAMIC CULTURE THROUGH EXPOSURE TO AND EDUCATION IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES HAS SINCE THE 1960'S AWAKENED THE PREVIOUSLY SLEEPY ISLAMIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BANGSA MORO (MUSLIM PEOPLE) OF THE PHILIPPINES.

15. THERE WERE ALSO HUNDREDS OF MUSLIM TEACHERS WORKING AS "TABLEEGH" -- IN ESSENCE, ISLAMIC MISSIONARIES -- ALL OVER MINDANAO. SEVERAL HUNDRED SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN HAVE ALSO BEEN SENT FOR SEVERAL YEARS OF TRAINING IN ARAB COUNTRIES. THE GENERAL TREND WAS AWAY FROM SECULARIZATION -- PRECISELY THAT TENDENCY REPRESENTED BY THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) WITH WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONDUCTING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. IN HIS ESTIMATION, ABOUT 60 PERCENT OF TODAY'S MUSLIM COMMUNITY REFLECTS "FUNDAMENTALIST" VIEWS, ABOUT 20 PERCENT SECULAR ONES, AND

THE REMAINDER IS IN THE MIDDLE. IN COMPARISON, HE ESTIMATED THE MUSLIM LEADERSHIP AS DIVIDED ABOUT 40 PERCENT EVENLY BETWEEN SECULARISTS AND FUNDAMENTALISTS, WITH THE REMAINDER IN THE MIDDLE.

¶6. ACCORDING TO DE LOS SANTOS, A NUMBER OF MUSLIMS SENT TO ASSIST THE "MOVEMENT" WHO HAVE BEEN DETAINED BY POLICE AND IDENTIFIED AS "JORDANIANS" ARE ACTUALLY PALESTINIANS, AND THOSE PARTIAL TO HAMAS RATHER THAN THE PLO. HE IS IN TOUCH WITH SOME OF THEIR COMPATRIOTS IN MANILA WHO ARE DEGREE CANDIDATES AT LOCAL UNIVERSITIES. THEY ARE PART OF A GROWING WORLD-WIDE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT THAT SEEKS TO CREATE MUSLIM COMMUNITIES GOVERNED BY MUSLIM LAW. DE LOS SANTOS SAID THAT THE ULTIMATE GOAL DOES NOT HAVE TO BE A SEPARATE MUSLIM STATE. THE MOVEMENT HAS SET UP A NUMBER OF LOCAL SELF-HELP ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES WHERE THE GOVERNMENT IS WEAK, SUCH AS LOCAL HEALTH CARE. MONEY FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES WAS "NO PROBLEM."

¶7. DE LOS SANTOS DISCLOSED THAT JOSE ALMONTE, THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR, HAD ASKED HIM LAST FEBRUARY TO WRITE AN ANALYSIS OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND WHERE IT WAS HEADING. HE SAID ALMONTE IS A CLOSE FRIEND WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE SAME UNIVERSITY GRADUATING CLASS. ALMONTE'S LETTER, THE ORIGINAL OF WHICH DE LOS SANTOS SHOWED POLOFF, ASKED HIM TO ANALYZE THE BASIC POLITICAL STRUCTURES IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, LIKELIHOOD OF COMING TO AN AGREEMENT, AND STEPS THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT TAKE. DE LOS SANTOS TOOK SEVERAL MONTHS TO COMPLETE THE STUDY, BUT SAID HE PULLED SOME OF HIS PUNCHES IN THE FINAL REPORT. SUMMARIZING HIS FINDINGS, HE EXPRESSED DOUBTS THAT THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) WOULD BE COMPETENT ENOUGH TO HOLD POWER IF GRANTED IT THROUGH THE PEACE PROCESS, AND DOUBTED THAT THE MNLF IN ANY CASE COULD NEGOTIATE PEACE ON BEHALF OF ALL FILIPINO MUSLIMS, SINCE THE MNLF IS REALLY "PAST HISTORY" THAT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY IRRELEVANT AND LOOKED UPON AS A SURROGATE FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

¶8. IN DISCUSSING HOUSE SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA, DE LOS SANTOS HAD STRONG WORDS FOR THIS "DEMAGOGIC POLITICIAN." HE SAID DE VENECIA HAD BEEN ENGAGED IN SHADY DEALINGS IN BOTH LIBYA AND IRAQ INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS FOR HIS FIRM, AND HAD TRIED TO "REPAY" HIS LIBYAN BENEFACTORS BY ACTING AS THEIR FRONT MAN AND ERRAND BOY. THE LIBYANS THOUGHT THEY COULD USE DE VENECIA'S AID IN ENLISTING PRESIDENT FIDEL RAMOS, WITH HIS EXCELLENT AMERICAN CONTACTS, AS A WEDGE IN HELPING END LIBYA'S DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION IN THE WEST. (EMBASSY HAS REPORTED EXTENSIVELY ON DE VENECIA'S EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF COL. QADHAFI). IT WAS A WELL-KEPT SECRET, ACCORDING TO DE LOS SANTOS, THAT RAMOS HAD RECEIVED FIVE MILLION PESOS (ABOUT DOLS 200,000) FROM THE LIBYANS TO FINANCE HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN IN 1992.

¶9. ACCORDING TO DE LOS SANTOS, MOST RESIDENT AMBASSADORS OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES ARE MODERATES, INCLUDING LIBYAN RAJAB ABDULAZIZ AZZAROUQ, WHO HE SAID IS A CANDIDATE FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES. HE SAID THAT ABOUT A QUARTER OF LIBYAN LARGESSE TO THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY COMES THROUGH THE "BACK DOOR."

¶10. COMMENT: DE LOS SANTOS' VIEWS REPRESENT THOSE OF A MUSLIM INTELLECTUAL WITH CLOSE TIES TO NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR ALMONTE. HIS NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS IN THE PEACE PROCESS WITH THE MNLF IS NOT REFLECTED IN THE PROGRESS BEING SHOWN TO DATE, ALTHOUGH THE QUESTION WHICH HE ADDRESSES -- WHETHER A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION WITH THE MNLF WILL USHER IN A LONG-TERM PERIOD OF PEACE WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY -- IS ONE THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED. HIS WARNING ABOUT THE TREND AWAY FROM SECULARIZATION AND TOWARD TRADITIONALISM BY YOUNG MUSLIMS IS A POINT WE HAVE HEARD BEFORE. HOWEVER, THE VIEW HELD BY MANY OF OUR INTERLOCUTORS IS THAT THE TREND IS TOWARD INCREASING RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS RATHER THAN VIOLENT FUNDAMENTALISM. THIS TREND OBVIOUSLY DESERVES CAREFUL WATCHING, AS DO THE DEVELOPING TIES BETWEEN FILIPINO

MUSLIMS AND THEIR BRETHREN IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

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